

CONFIDENTIAL

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2 May 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT : Estimates Concerning Chinese Communist Reactions
to the Introduction of Limited Numbers of US
Combat Forces into Laos

ATTACHMENT: Excerpts from Recent Estimates

1. In our estimates we have taken the positions that,
in response to the stated US action:

a. The Communist response to such US action would
probably not be an immediate and violent Communist
military counteraction. Rather, the Bloc would
probably launch a major political and propaganda
campaign coupled with threats of retaliatory military
action to "protect" the Laotians. They would probably
delay any overt intervention until they had assessed
the reaction in Laos and the world at large. The
Pathet Lao forces, stiffened by covert Viet Minh forces,
would probably step up their campaign, seeking to take

25X1

over those major towns not occupied by US forces. If, on the other hand, the US action did appear to steady the Royal Laotian government and improve the performance of its army, the Communists might then decide to introduce Viet Minh units openly into Laos.

b. In this situation, the North Vietnamese would probably carry the main burden of Bloc military action in Laos, with the Chinese Communists participating on a major scale only should this become necessary to protect the Communist stake in Laos.

c. Communist China and the USSR appear to be in general accord on policy in Laos, with Moscow clearly the principal architect of that course. However, Communist China's interests in Laos are the greater, and Sino-Soviet strains over Bloc policy there might occur if US action threatened the Bloc position in Laos.

2. We believe these judgments to be still valid.

3. The only coordinated estimate which bears in part on the question of Chinese Communist reactions to the stated US move is SMIE 58-61: "Probable Communist Reactions to

Certain US Courses of Action with Respect to Laos," dated 21 February 1961. As discussed in the attachment, O/NE has since prepared four memoranda for the DCI which bear on the problem.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

ABBOT SMITH
Acting Chairman

Attachment

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